

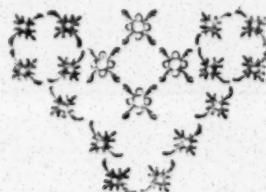
R E A S O N S  
FOR LEAVING THE  
METHODIST SOCIETY,

I N A

LETTER to a PREACHER of the first  
Rank in that CONNECTION.

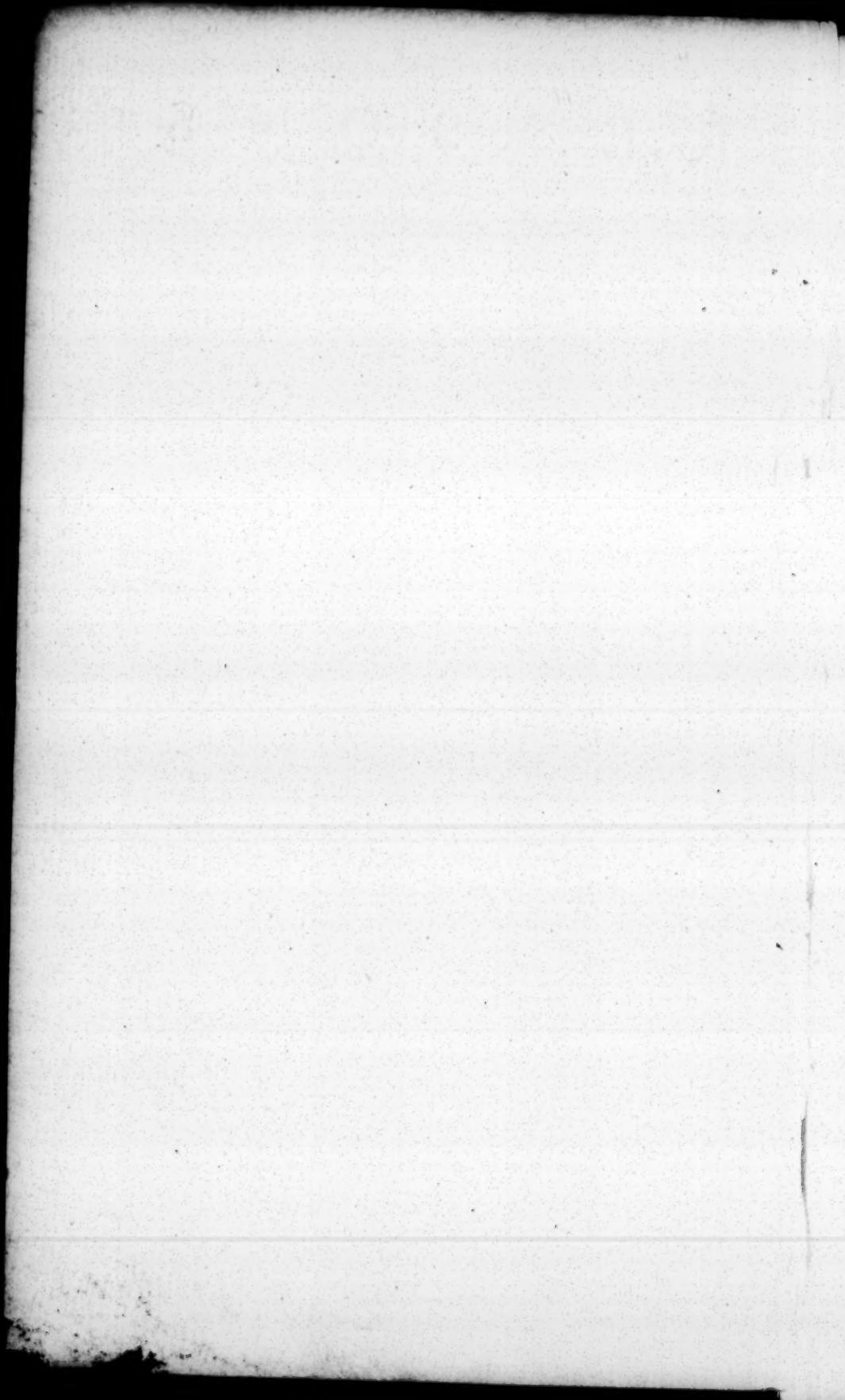
— where full Instinct is th' unerring Guide,  
What Pope or Council can they need beside?

POPE.

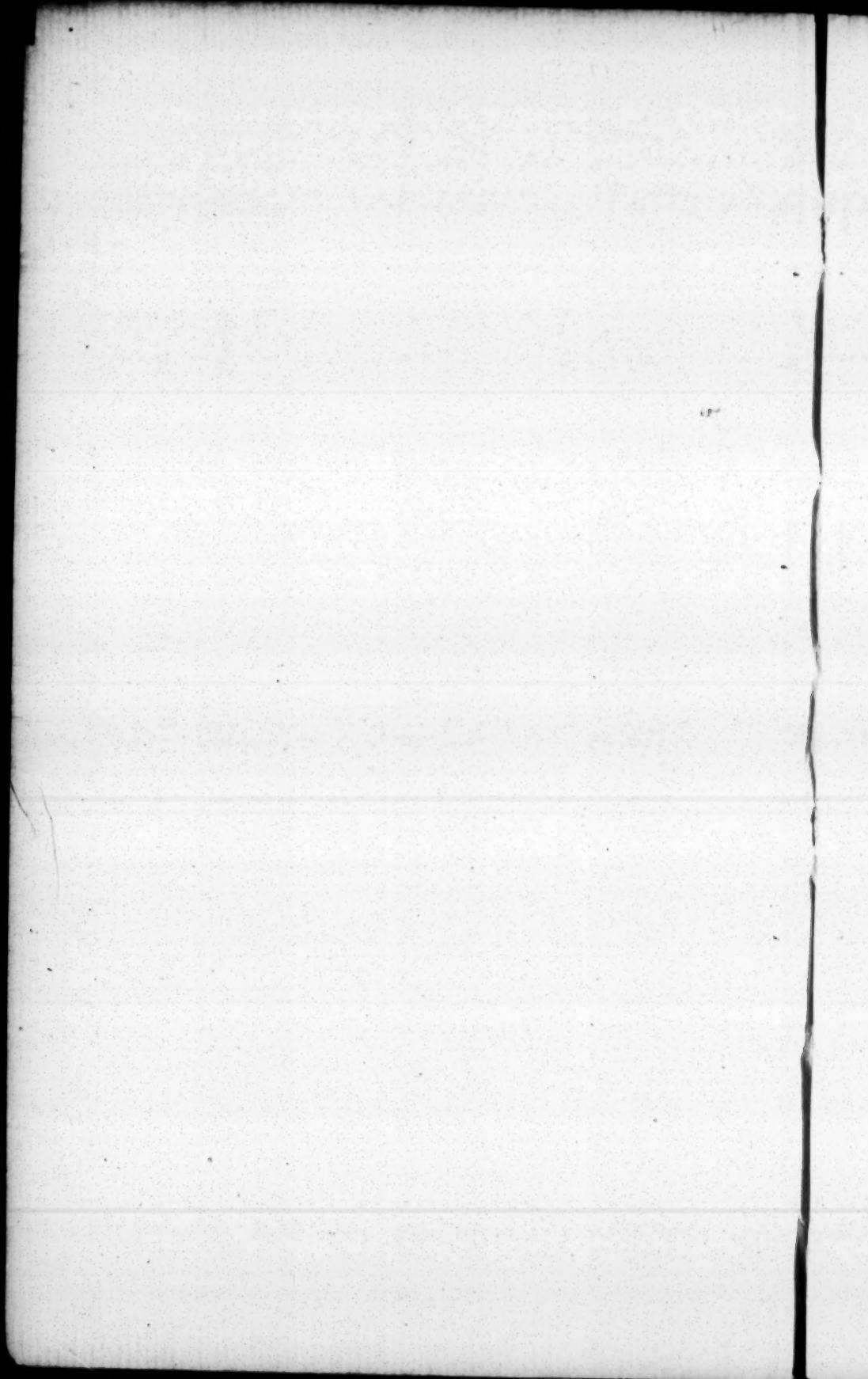


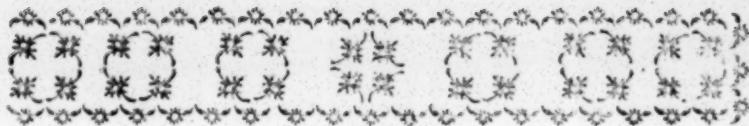
D U B L I N :

Printed in the Year M DCC LXXVII.



THE Reader will please to observe, the Preacher meant in the Title is the Assistant, who according to avowed Rules, is the first or principal among them, while Mr. Wesley pleases to continue him his Representative, which is generally for a year or more at a time.





# R E A S O N S

## FOR LEAVING THE

## METHODIST SOCIETY.

S I R,

I INTEND by this Letter to notify my departure from the Methodist Connection, of which, for a great number of years, I have been, and to this moment am, a member; no doubt, my reasons for this conduct may be required. I shall give them in plainness and sincerity.

**FIRST.** Because I think the Methodist Police is subversive of Christian Liberty, and has a tendency to banish the very idea of Civil Liberty, according to its present constitution, which differs materially from the General Rules of that Society, and the plain account of the people called Methodists, written in the year 1748, as I think will fully appear from what follows.

**SECONDLY.** Because a new Legislative Power hath arisen among you, called, THE CONFERENCE, or body of Methodist preachers, who at their an-

nual meetings, make laws or rules for the government of the people, altogether unknown to them, and without their consent ; to which, obedience is required under penalty of exclusion. Instance, in the case of general Subscriptions and Modes of conducting Society Matters. This is such a coercive power, as is inconsistent with my idea of civil and religious liberty, especially the latter, where every thing should be free, and is altogether unknown in Lands where the right of representation is in the people, who delegate a power similar to the above, to such only as they think fit.

THIRDLY. Because such a power as the Conference assumes, is not claimed by any of the Protestant Churches, whose Ministers are fitted by a mode of education ; much better qualified than yours for such an undertaking, who in a general way, emerge from the lowest Mechanicks, and must necessarily have poor contracted ideas, altogether unfit to govern ; nay, many of them hardly know so much of self-government as is sufficient to keep them a few months in a society of intelligent people, without being despised for their behaviour. Here proofs crowd in upon me, but I spare you. Dominion is not founded in Grace, suppose the highest degree of it.—But to return, the Protestant Churches I mean, are those of England and Scotland : in the former, the only general meetings for business, are the Bishops annual Visitations ; and although they are

are trammelled with the Laws of the Land, yet the Laiety are not excluded ; the principal officers who compose it are laymen. Besides, the Representatives of the several parishes by their Church-wardens, &c. who on an average are a majority of the assembly, and in the latter there is no meeting for business from the grand general assembly of that Church, her Synods national or provincial down to the smallest Presbytery, in all which laymen make a very considerable part ; in both, all proceedings and decisions are by known rules laid down ; that all are, or may be easily acquainted with ; but yours, such as they are, after undergoing alterations and additions every year, you make a point of carefully keeping from the knowledge of the very persons they are designed to operate upon.

FOURTHLY. Because all the Preachers, (but especially those called Assistants) take to themselves the whole Rule, Order, and Government, in Temporal matters, as well as Spiritual, contrary to their Commission ; as it is expressed in the plain account of the People called **METHODISTS**, so often referred to by Mr. Wesley, viz.

1. To expound Morning and Evening,
2. To meet the Society, &c. once a Week.
3. To visit the Classes once a Quarter.
4. To hear and decide Differences.
5. To put the Disorderly on Trial.
6. To

6. To see the Stewards and Leaders discharge their Offices.

7. To meet the Stewards and Leaders Weekly, to overlook the Steward's Accounts.

From these Rules, is it possible to infer that the Assistant can turn the Societies upside-down, or dissolve them, as they have vainly boasted; that the people are Mr. Wesley's, and he or his Assistant does not stand in the same relation that other Pastors or Teachers do to theirs. That the people are, upon all occasions to pay an implicit obedience to their Commands. Let us view the Rules above given: The first, second, third, fifth and sixth, are just and orderly, supposing the person faithfully discharging the offices of a Preacher, to those who put themselves under their direction for that purpose; but I apprehend in a civilized Nation, where the people pay for the protection of the Government, who have wisely appointed Judges to decide Differences, by known Laws; nothing more can be implied by the fourth, than what is the duty of every honest impartial person; and that is, to preserve the Public Peace, and promote Love, Unity and Harmony, as far as his influence extends; and with respect to the seventh, there can surely be no more inferred from it, than that natural desire every person has to see, that those among whom he labours should prosper in Temporals as well as Spirituals; and indeed here I think every person who contributes to the sup-

port of a Society, Civil or Religious, has a right to overlook the Public Accompts even more than any Preacher. But is it possible from any or all these Rules put together, to infer that any one or more Preachers shall assume to themselves a power of reading out of Society, in the most public manner, without Trial, without mentioning any Charge against them, without even speaking to them in private, without the least intimation of such a design ; nay, even while there was apparent friendship, and what is most infernal of all, holding up their Characters and Names with infamy, in public print ; and after all this, when the Charges for which this violation of all Laws, Human and Divine, was made the pretence, has been brought to a public and solemn hearing, they have all every one proved to be but hear-say stories and misrepresentations that were absolutely false, fully, fairly, and amply proved so ; but they were of such a nature, that supposing them true, they would hardly subject the persons to a friendly admonition. All this, and much more has been done by you, with impunity, and therefore may be again, which leads to a fifth reason—Because, there is no security among you for what a man holds most dear in Civil Life, his Character, and usefulness in a Religious Capacity. If a thirty years standing in the Society, with an unblemished Reputation, is not a sufficient security from public Expulsion, I know not what is. If a great number of years piously employed in meeting a few sincere persons for Prayer and

and Christian Conversation, attended with evident signs of usefulness on the persons Lives and Manners, as well as their public testimony to the truth of it, be not a sufficient security from being publicly read out, as disunited with those who are knit together by the strongest ties of Love and Gratitude, without giving any reason or even speaking to them in private, especially as the only reason given for such a change of persons, called **LEADERS**, is gathered from the plain account of the people called **METHODISTS**, in the following manner :

“ On a Complaint, that the Leaders were insufficient for the Work, having neither Gifts nor Grace for such an Employment ; the answer was, “ such as they are, God hath blessed their Labours ; “ but if any of them were remarkably wanting in “ either Gifts or Grace, Mr. Wesley, and I will add “ the Assistant as his Representative, was to be told “ of it first, and they shall be changed for better.” Here you see the Complaint was to originate with the people, who in fact are good judges, as they are fellow Citizens and Neighbours, who have a perfect knowledge of their Leaders Lives and Conversations, which you absolutely cannot. You are like Birds of passage, a few months at a time in one part of the Kingdom, and a few in another, and often years together out of it, so that its morally impossible you can be proper judges ; and therefore the Rule wisely says, “ the Complaint of the people,” but, their **HIGH MIGHTINESSES**, the Conference, I suppose, has given you

you a dispensation here, that notwithstanding the earnest Intreaties and Remonstrances of the people, who experimentally knew the value of their Leaders, you, contrary to every apostolick direction, tore them asunder, who had for a series of years been mutually useful to each other; lived and loved as Brethren,—what would have given the highest pleasure to a good, to a generous mind, excited your Malice, your Envy, or made an impression on your Fears, (which is a predominant passion in every bad mind), that in time this unity might prove hurtful to your politic designs; therefore, the diabolical maxim divide and rule, separate them, their affections (lamentable truth) in time will cool; let us preach up the dignity of our Office, tell them confidently, (which has often been the case) we are the Ambassadors of JESUS CHRIST; and if they must have an object none is fitter than such illustrious, I had almost said Pretenders—Persons—All this has been done with impunity, and may be done again, and therefore, &c.

SIXTHLY. Because there is no security against the Preachers, publickly overturning the reformed Doctrines of Christianity; at the same time that they openly declare themselves Members of the Church of England; denying the merits of Christ to be fully sufficient to satisfy divine justice. That Faith is no more the gift of God than talking or walking, &c. &c. In a word, there is no security against

gainst your using the most blasphemous expressions ; if any dare presume to speak to you for giving offence to the people by these things, your remedy is at hand,—*read them out of Society* ; or should you condescend to suffer them to continue, what redress is there in such cases ; the Conference is your dernier resource, suppose any so weak as to acknowledge such a power, how must they proceed ? They must attend this annual Meeting at London, Bristol, or Leeds, to make good the Charges. Before whom ? The Body of Methodist Preachers, who perhaps are all involved in the same guilt ; at any rate are connected together to support that authority, the appellant petitions against. If the charge be for Doctrines, it is easily seen the difficulty in this point ; if the person has no mind to quit the connection, it is only using a little finness, and by wiredrawing, to give all his words a quite different meaning from what the very sound of them convey to common hearers, the judges supposing them unable to withstand the irresistible power of truth, will take such a defence as a recantation, and without further ceremony set aside the charge ; but setting all these things aside, the matter is impracticable.—Who would be at the pains to undertake a journey, perhaps from the remote parts of Ireland or Scotland, or even from the capitals of either, to any of the above-mentioned places, how few could afford to spare the time from their business, and how fewer still among Methodists that are capable, notwithstanding the goodness

ness

ness of their cause to support a charge before such judges, who though they might be dissatisfied with the alarming manner in which their discipline, (as they call it) was conducted, yet be secretly pleased with the thing itself ; and with respect to doctrines, where is the rule here, for want of a proper education their notions of Theology are merely superficial ; you are not agreed among yourselves, it being no uncommon thing to hear you preach against one another, but the people, if they would have the favour and good opinion of the resident Preachers for the time-being, must think as he does.—And therefore, &c.

SEVENTHLY. Because you publickly read out of office the principal Lay-officer, according to Methodist œconomy, I mean the Steward of the Dublin Society, the person employed in the receipts and disbursements of the public Money, without giving him the least intimation of your design, that he might be prepared to settle his accounts, and have, what he might reasonably expect for his upright services, a public declaration of his fidelity ; but on the contrary, by your unmerited treatment the people were left at liberty to suppose a criminality in his official conduct, that in its consequences might have been prejudicial to his character, was it not that a speedy enquiry obliged you to tell the true cause, and here I blush for you while I relate it.

Mr. WESLEY frequently informs Stewards of the removal of Preachers, and it is necessary, in order

that he may provide for the expence which is occasioned thereby. One of your Brethren had rendered himself obnoxious to numbers by his conduct, Mr. Wesley heard of it, and accordingly ordered him away by letter to a Leader, and another ordered immediately to come in his room ; when the Steward was made acquainted with this, and seen the orders, he thought it his duty to inform the person of it, by acquainting him to prepare for his departure, as another was appointed by Mr. Wesley to succeed him ; but this was an unpardonable offence, for which you treated him as above-mentioned, nor could you do more had he been the public defaulter of unaccounted pounds. All this you have done respecting him, with impunity, and may do again.— And therefore, &c.

**EIGHTHLY.** Because you have wantonly dissolved a meeting of the most respectable members of the Society, who met constantly from Eight to Nine o'clock on Sabbath Evenings, for the singularly laudable purpose of paying a British Sixpence weekly, for the relief of sick poor, (some hundreds of whom have, in the space of ten years been happily preserved from the deepest distress, that old age and poverty are liable to) besides being regularly visited weekly by two of that meeting, who took it in rotation to perform this labour of love, this work, which their blessed Master so highly commends.—This ! that but the bare mention of must give the highest pleasure to every humane

humane breast, alarmed your fears, and became subject matter for conferential consideration, though perhaps the only one of the kind in the whole connection. “\* The Sunday Evening Meeting is wrong,” “ What, shall we give up our discipline for money? “ No,”—For the Lord’s sake, how came this meeting across Methodist discipline ; it was held at an hour that all your public and private assemblies were over, the business of it was to enquire of the weekly visitors the state of the sick and indigent, and to vote them a Supply, which has amounted yearly, on an average, to above 50l. Was it not strengthening the cause of Methodism, by relieving their poor, and adding additional lustre to that religious Society ; but alas for it ! the Preacher was not Prophet, Priest, and King here, he was only allowed one vote, and to sit in the little assembly like another Subscriber, which there is reason to believe he would not have done, only to be a spy on their conduct,—so amazingly jealous have you all been of your power and authority, which really has a bad appearance ; but to be short, this Meeting has been from its first institution, in the year 1768, according to your apprehensions, a thorn in your side. A number of respectable persons were thereby necessarily connected together, this was unfriendly to your political designs already mentioned ; several attempts have been made upon it, to destroy it altogether, or at least divide the people without effect, until the present Æra, marked,

\* See Minutes of Conference, 1776.

strongly marked, with violence, and the highest acts of despotism ever known among a Society of free-born subjects, when every sacred tye of honour, love, and humanity, have been wantonly broke—For what? To establish an unlimited arbitrary power in Methodist Preachers, I had almost said over the souls, bodies, &c. of the people;—would to God I had the least foundation in reason to say any thing better; and because I have not, shall close my eighth reason for quitting the Connection.

NINTHLY. Because you have assumed the power of destroying a legal compact of the highest public utility, for nearly the same reasons as the former. About twelve years ago, a worthy man, now with God, gave 100l. for the purpose of building an Alms-house for poor Widows, provided a number of persons belonging to the Society could be found, who would engage to carry the humane design into execution; there were soon seven men got, who readily undertook the difficult and expensive work, were indefatigable in raising money by subscription, and when that failed, went into personal bonds for the remainder, to complete an edifice for the accommodation of twenty-four poor Widows; these were then to use the expression, incorporated, by signing a deed of trust, and thereby became managers for a Charity, their fostring hands had brought to maturity; they had frequent occasions to meet together, to see the house kept in order, and when a vacancy hap-

happened, to fill it with the most worthy object; but as there was rent and interest to pay, it was judged proper to have an annual Sermon and public Collection for this purpose. By the usual benevolence of the inhabitants of Dublin, and a general subscription, the debts in a few years was paid off; Providence smiled upon them, and crowned their endeavours with success; but unfortunately for them, (though the original deed was drawn under the direction of a Preacher) no provision was made in it, that a Preacher should sit with them in their periodical meetings for conducting the charity; and they generally, if not always presumed to meet without consulting them, who could really have but little to say in such a matter, seeing they are but a few months in a place at one time, and few of them return again, at least for years, it was thought the business could be very well done without them, but their jealous fears were again alarmed. Here was a company of respectable persons necessarily connected together without you; here was a house worth some hundreds, although well secured by deed, properly registered for the purposes for which it was built, yet this was not enough; it was not consolidated with the houses in the Methodist connection, by its deeds being lodged in a strong box in London, although it was secured to that interest, by a clause in the deed, which says, when a Trustee leaves the Methodist Society, he forfeits his trust; one would imagine this security sufficient to answer every end for that interest, no,—the Preach-

ers in that little meeting of seven men, had no vote; nay, could not sit as a check upon the conversation, this was unsupportable, like Mordecai to Haman, you could not be happy while any thing stood in the way of absolute rule, in every the smallest Minutiæ; but an unsurmountable difficulty stood in the way, all these men were Members of the Society, and had not forfeited that right; this no doubt preserved them for some years. It was not until your deep penetration found the way to overcome this legal fence, but oh! tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon, that you read a majority of these Trustees out of the Society, under pretence of a supposed misdemeanor, to save the above mentioned clause in the deed; immediately then made a new one, appointed other Trustees in the room of those you read out, and took care that for the future there should be no meeting of the Trustees for business, without you or your successors for ever, at all such meetings to sit President, in a word to be Lord Paramont every where, and Generalissimo over all; though you endeavoured to deny this charge at a late trial, viz. removing the Trustees to make a new deed, yet it was obvious to every bystander,—your own conscience must accuse you. Why did not you ask them in private, whether the poor trifling matters you brought against them upon hearsay evidence was true, or make any other proper enquiry? you would then have received that satisfaction these honest men gave to a crowded audience, assembled for the pur-

pose,

pose, deny it as you may, the matter is self evident, the grand design being answered, every one of them was invited to take Tickets and return into the Society. Thus have you trampled on every sacred tye, thus have you treated men who for many years bore the burthen and heat of the day, whose purses have been always open to support a Society, that without offence, they were excluded from with infamy, I use that word because it is the highest stretch of power you can exercise, and was originally intended to mark the vilest characters who might unwarily get in among us ; and what security the persons have, you put in the places of those thus removed, that will in a future day exempt them from similar treatment, I cannot tell, but this I am sure of, that these will never be higher in the esteem of Preachers than those formerly were,—when you are gone and they get new masters, perhaps they will then know more ; but for my part I cannot think myself safe in such a Society.— And therefore, &c. &c.

TENTHLY, and lastly. Because the arangement of subordination among you is diametrically opposite to my notions of liberty, viz. first, the assistant is the Primum Mobile, or first wheel in the Methodist Machine, the common Preacher the second, the Steward the third, the leaders the lowest wheel but one, and the people the lowest of all ; and the greatest care and pains has been taken upon all occasions to inculcate this doctrine, contrary to our received notions of government, and contrary to our blessed Master's express direction.

I look

I LOOK upon the body of the people to be the very radix of all power, and consequently the Primum Mobile of all government, and whatever authority governors or rulers have, it is from the people; but this is an argument so well known that I need not spend time in demonstrating a self evident truth. Our Lords words militates against you, Matt.23, verse 10. *Neither be ye called Masters, for one is your Master even Christ: but he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.* And when the ten Disciples were moved against the two Brethren concerning a request made to him, his answer was “*Ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you, but whoever will be great among you, let him be your Minister, and whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.*”

THERE is but one thing in your favour, that the desire of power and pre-eminence was discovered, even among our Lords immediate followers, but received a proper reproof from himself, and left upon record for our instruction and direction. I have now given you some of the reasons that induced me to withdraw from further connection with the Society, as such, it is a matter of conscience, it would be a reproach to my understanding as well as doing violence to my judgment, to continue after such a view of things as I have given in the foregoing pages,

which

which are all perfectly consistent with the truth, and what every person among you who will but for a moment divest himself of prejudice may clearly see, only it would have the appearance of vanity I might appeal to your own heart. The time was, when I have reason to believe you thought as I do, but there is no accounting for the changes that pass upon us, upon the whole, I love you all as men, and wish most sincerely your present and eternal salvation. I shall gladly take every opportunity of doing you all the good in my power, but you may say; “ how come you then to publish this letter?” why, to save myself the trouble of giving a particular account to every enquirer, as well as to give my Brethren the most solid and conclusive arguments for the propriety of my conduct; I assure you they are the effect of calm deliberation, void of ill will or any base low or unworthy passion. Nor have I the least design (was any production of mine capable of producing such an effect) to warp the judgment of any that continue in connection with you, No? my ideas of christian liberty forbid such mean craft, let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, and take the Apostles advice “ *prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.*” Perhaps you may be displeased with the title and manner, but I thought it softer than to put it in the form, and give it, the favourite title, a check,—to despotism, had I leisure to prosecute

cute the subject, I might easily give you a second and third check ;—— but this shall serve, as I have not the remotest intention to make Proselytes, and wish to live peaceably with all men, and cultivate those dispositions, which, by the grace, and through the all powerful and prevailing merits and intercession of Jesus Christ, the Lord our **RIGHT-EOUSNESS** qualify for a seat at his right hand. Where unfriendly animosity, lust for power, pride and contention, shall never enter. And O ! what pity it is, that these should make such havock among those who in an eminent manner profess to be the self-den'y'd devoted followers of a meek and lowly Jesus, fellow travellers to the same heavenly country, expectants of the same eternal residence.—And now, my dear friends, seeing this is so, what work yet remains to be done in us, before we are fit to be transplanted among the perfected spirits of the just.

THE time is short, here and there a grey hair be-speak an approaching dissolution. O, that he who has the hearts of all in his hand may so mould and fashion them, that while we are in this state of probation and trial, we may never more fall out, since it is, humanly speaking, impossible for us to fall in by the way. May we be more and more engaged to go uniformly on in the high way of **HOLINESS**, until we meet in that happy place where love, the

pure

